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101752Z Sep 05

ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00
	DOEE-00	PERC-00	DS-00	EB-00	EUR-00	FBIE-00	H-00
	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	M-00	NEA-00
	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-00	OMB-00	NIMA-00	PA-00	GIWI-00
	PRS-00	P-00	FMPC-00	SP-00	IRM-00	SSO-00	SS-00
	STR-00	TRSE-00	SCRS-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-00	G-00
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FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2268  
INFO AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE  
DARFUR COLLECTIVE  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
USLO TRIPOLI  
USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L NDJAMENA 001377

SIPDIS

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PRM, USAID/OTI AND USAID/W FOR DAFURRMT; LONDON AND PARIS  
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SUBJECT: SALIM ON THE NEXT ROUND OF DARFUR PEACE TALKS, SLM  
CONFERENCE

Classified By: Political/Economic Officer Kathleen FitzGibbon for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: During his visit to Chad for consultations over September 8-9, the African Union's Special Envoy for Darfur, Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, shared his views on the upcoming round of peace talks. Salim is committed to starting the talks on September 15, but acknowledges that members of Mini Minawi's faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) will likely come late if their leadership conference holds. In his meeting with SLM members in N'Djamena, Salim urged them to be prepared to send representatives to the workshops while the conference is in progress. SLM expressed their concerns that SLM members cannot be at the conference and the workshops at the same time. SLM told Salim that they cannot go to Abuja without holding the conference because the field commanders are threatening to disavow them and the negotiations. Salim's position on the postponement is deepening SLM suspicions of him and the AU. Nonetheless, with no financing in sight for the conference, SLM members are flexible, but becoming increasingly discouraged that they will not be strong enough or united going into the most important round of talks. We share their concerns that the same negative dynamic will once again play out in Abuja if SLM does not have a chance to organize itself and its negotiating agenda. On the touchy issue for Chad of its co-mediation on Darfur, Salim's visit also appears to have alleviated some of the strain in the AU-Chad relationship over Chad's role. End Summary.

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START DATE FOR NEXT ROUND  
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2. (SBU) Salim, together with AU negotiators Sam Ibok and Boubou Niang, traveled to N'Djamena as part of their consultations in various capitals in advance of the next round of peace talks. During their visit, Ambassador and P/E officer discussed the issue of the SLM conference and the timing of the re-start of the talks with them on September 8. Salim said that the September 15 date best accommodated the views of the different parties. He said that the GOS, JEM, and SLM Chairman wanted them sooner. Salim, who is traveling to New York for the World Summit at the U.N., from September 14-16, said that had he known about his invitation earlier, he would have proposed starting the talks later. In the upcoming round of talks, Salim said the workshops will be run by experts in power-sharing, wealth-sharing, and security arrangements. The talks will use three resource persons to run each session, which the AU would like to do concurrently. President Obasanjo asked that the AU consider holding the talks in Ota, Ogun State at a conference facility there. Ibok and Niang are flying to Lagos in the coming days to view the facilities. The idea is to isolate the participants from outside influence and distractions.

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SLM CONFERENCE  
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13. (SBU) Salim said that it is possible for the SLM group to have the conference in the next two weeks, but it would be difficult. In his opinion, international funding is not forthcoming because the conference is not all-inclusive and would appear to be an attempt to oust Abdelwahid. Salim told us that the substantive discussions would not start until both groups were represented.

14. (SBU) Ambassador Ibok raised the possibility that the Mini-Abdelwahid split cannot be repaired and that the AU will be negotiating with three rebel movements: SLM-Abdelwahid, SLM-Mini, and JEM. For practical purposes, this is what is already happening. The AU sent its requests for participants to both Abdelwahid and Mini and held consultations with both separately. Salim described his meeting with Mini and subsequent visit to Jebel Marra as inconclusive. He came away from the trip with the impression that Mini and the Zaghawa have the top field commanders in their camp and the Fur and other ethnic groups constitute the middle and lower ranks with loyalty to Abdelwahid.

15. (SBU) Salim expressed his concern that the conference is being planned by one group and will solidify the ethnic split within SLM rather than repair it. Salim said that Mini's group could expand the meeting's scope and participation if it found ways to undercut Abdelwahid's refusal to attend, such as holding it in a neutral place and using an international facilitator. Salim's proposed alternative is for the donors to finance an all-inclusive conference to be held during a break in the talks in late October.

16. (SBU) SLM members in N'Djamena met with Salim on September 9 to discuss their plans for the conference and request to push back the Abuja talks to October 1. According to Abdeljabar Dosa and Traiyo Ali, Salim explained the AU's reasoning for the September 15 date. Dosa and the others told Salim that their group was not part of the Dar es Salam discussions which confirmed the re-start date. They are going ahead with conference preparations. The SLM members told Salim that the field commanders are demanding the conference. The "politicos" are literally "under the gun" on this issue. The commanders want their positions well-known by the negotiators prior to the upcoming talks. Moreover, the commanders are complaining that they have not seen "their Chairman" (Abdelwahid Nur) in over a year. Dosa said this sentiment is shared by commanders in Jebel Marra as well. They want Abdelwahid and Mini Minawi to explain what they have been doing and where the peace talks are going. Without these consultations, the negotiators believe the field commanders will disavow them and the peace process. SLM will remain flexible and consider options such as sending one or two people to the workshops, according to Ali. The problem is that key members of the negotiating teams need to attend the workshops, but should also be at the SLM conference. Even if SLM sent a few "seat-warmers", the result of this arrangement will once again be an unprepared SLM. Ali and Dosa are discouraged by the lack of response to their funding appeals for the conference.

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CHAD MEDIATION ISSUE  
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17. (C) While in N'Djamena, the team also met with President Idriss Deby, Foreign Minister Ahmad Allam-mi, and JC Chairman General Ali. According to Salim, President Deby was still angry over attempts to oust or diminish Chad's role as a co-mediator in the process. Salim said it is clear that the Chadians felt humiliated. Ambassador Wall asked Salim the status of Chad's current role. Salim said that he is the AU's mediator and he will be "assisted by" the Chad mediation team. He said that the Chadians accept this arrangement and they will continue to play an important role in the mediation efforts. Salim described General Ali as particularly helpful in Abuja and noted that the Chadians' know the movements and the terrain better than other international partners.

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COMMENT  
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18. (C) Despite Salim's insistence, practically-speaking, the September 15 start date is somewhat untenable. The AU is still deciding on the venue for a meeting that should start in less than a week. The logistics of bringing the rebel movements should already be underway. Salim himself will be in New York. It is entirely possible the start-up could slip a week, which could give SLM more time for the conference. Salim's scenario that includes an October break for a conference will require a donor to take charge in planning

for it to succeed. In either case, the break between Mini and Abdelwahid appears unbridgeable and we should be prepared once again to deal with two separate SLM groups, possibly three, for the upcoming talks. Meanwhile, the distrust of Salim and the AU among Mini's supporters is growing daily. They interpret his intransigence on postponing the talks for two weeks as a sign of weak leadership and his bias in favor of the Government of Sudan, Justice and Equality Movement, and Abdelwahid. They are looking to the international community to place pressure on the AU to delay the talks. On the issue of Chad's co-mediation on Darfur, the Joint Commission meeting and Salim's consultations in N'Djamena

over September 8-9 also helped patch up Chad's strained relationship with the AU.

19. (U) Khartoum and Tripoli Minimize Considered.  
WALL

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